1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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wastelands and roadside verges are occasionally turned on to sulla fields and on to bastard fallow but that is all. This, too, is a necessary consequence of the pressure on land resources mentioned above: land is too precious to be used as pasture or even as true fallow *vaine pâture*. A consequent disadvantage is that, in the enforced absence of folding, dung is expensive and rarely applied.

Thirdly, much more than in other Mediterranean areas of dry farming, the Maltese cultivators are already alive to the necessity of raising cash crops which are also rotation crops, and are capable of choosing multi-purpose plants for catch-drop use. Broad beans, together with bread and *pasta*, form the basis of the countryman's diet but are also used as horse and mule fodder, depending on crop quality and ruling prices. Chickpeas similarly have alternative uses as dry fodder, green vegetables or coffee substitutes. Fodder crop improvement or change is therefore not simply a matter of elevating standards of primitive farming, but implies an agricultural revolution.

Given this situation, it would seem that there are only two reasonable methods of increasing fodder production in the near future, assuming that such an increase is desired. The first is that of devoting more scarce irrigated land to leguminous fodder production. From the economic point of view, any diversion of land now producing irrigated vegetables to forage growing would be of doubtful value. Malta, even now, is not self-supporting in vegetable crops such as tomatoes, and dietetically would probably benefit from an even greater consumption of green vegetables. Though a net exporter of potatoes and onions, Malta has to import unnecessarily large quantities of these same products. Moreover, as examined in connection with Vegetables and Fruit Crops (pp.213-219), the use of irrigated land for fodder growing would debar the development of Malta's only possible large-scale exports - fruits and early specialised vegetables. The loss of such an important export possibility would weigh heavily against the gain in the production of fodder.

The second possibility is that of the replacement of the poor wheats and barleys by new hybrid sorghums. Here too there are difficulties. Though sorghums generally have low transpiration rates, their large leaf areas make them more dependent on subsoil water than the short, local barleys. On the other hand, they survive early droughts better than most grains. A second possible danger lies in our ignorance concerning their vulnerability to indigenous insect pests. The third difficulty is social. The poor barley lands on which sorghums might be grown, as indicated earlier, are those in which terrain makes it most necessary for continuous and arduous manual labour to be applied. It is precisely these areas, vulnerable to soil erosion, which are most likely to be neglected or abandoned by a society with rising living standards and demands. Nevertheless, here may lie both an easy and efficient way of improving and increasing fodder production without mortgaging the future of the best lands.

SULLA - HEDYSARIUM CORONARIUM L.

Sulla, the most important fodder crop, is a perennial legume indigenous to the Mediterranean. The variety *Africa* or *Gaulitana*, erect, slightly branched and often growing 4 to 6 feet in height, is usually found, particularly in Gozo: the more prostrate and finer foliaged varieties such as *Diffusa* and *Prostrata* are more recently introduced and less common.

Matured seed is sown in late summer and it germinates after the first autumnal rains, flowering between March and May. It is then usually cut or pulled and either used as green fodder or, more commonly, sun-dried as hay. Little affected by pests and diseases, sulla develops luxuriant foliage and extensive root systems. It therefore provides good anti-erosion soil cover as well as possessing excellent powers of nitrogen fixation. Water requirements are lower than for any of the cultivated *Trifolium* or *Medicago* plants. In first flowering, its protein content is high, but some of the fodder quality is lost by the delaying of harvesting until the yield in volume is highest and also by poor storage. Much sulla is sold off the farm.

As Fig. 73 shows, the distribution of sulla in Malta corresponds in general with the distribution of cultivated land, but it is noticeably less important in

[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 203]

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 in companies to some one of their
574 friends, at whose house they amuse them-
262 selves eating honey cakes and pancakes or fritters, and playing for nuts till the church bells ring a little before or after midnight.

At the conclusion of the service they come out again and devote the remainder of the night to amusements.

796 The approaching festival of Christmas
534 is heralded in some of the villages of
[184] Malta by the appearance of the "zakk" and "tambur" players in the streets. (*)

[237] The *zakk* or bagpipe is a wind instrument—one of the primitive instruments of sylvan music—formed of an inflated dog skin, which is held by the player under his left arm, with the legs

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[541] (*) The *Zakk* and tambourine are also in use amongst our lower classes on the days of Carnival.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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directed upwards, and having a mouth piece by which the skin is filled, and a cane flute or pipe which is played with both hands. This the country people play at this time of the year to represent the shepherds of Bethlehem. 796 534 [237]

The decking out of the *presepiu*, a crib or representation of the Nativity of the Holy Child at Bethlehem, by a group of dolls with pasteboard scenery, furnishes amusement to the Maltese, both old and young. 796 778

Several of the houses have a crib more or less artistically arranged, and the better the arrangements of the crib, the greater is the concourse of people who come to see it.

The custom of decking our churches and habitations with evergreens at Christmas has existed from the very establishment of Christianity and was 796 174 824